

Remarks/Arguments

The Examiner has rejected the title as not being descriptive of the invention. In response, the title has been amended to "Presence Management System".

Claim rejections under 35 USC § 102

The examiner has rejected all pending claims as being anticipated by Cuomo *et al* (US 6148328). The rejection is traversed.

In order to distinguish the invention more clearly from Cuomo, but without any admission that the original claims are anticipated, the independent claims have been amended to recite that the watching and watched parties are "connected to the presence management systems" (emphasis added), and that the presence management system comprises "a first input arranged to receive notification requests from watching parties in use, each notification request being in respect of a watched party, and at least one of parties, comprising a plurality of individuals, wherein each of said individuals has a respective separate connection to the presence management system" (emphasis added). The reference to "connected to the presence management system" was implicit from the original wording of the same, but has been added for clarity purposes. The reference to "each said individual has a respective connection to the presence management system" is disclosed several times during the discussion of "Aggregates" on pages 21 to page 24 line 4.

Cuomo discloses a system either for alerting a target user to whether a selected group of other computer users are online or offline (see Abstract). These alerts comprise a user determined sound that plays when an individual in the selected group logs on or logs off (see Figure 2, column 3 lines 32 to 34). Cuomo also discloses playing a tone to signify the continued logged on status of selected individuals (see Figure 2, column 3 lines 34 to 39), and the playing of a tone to signify the total number of users logged on to a particular system (see Figure 2, column 3 lines 40 to 42). On this basis, Cuomo is directed to providing a simulation of the sounds of an office (in which a user can hear the presence or absence of other users due to their physical proximity) for a computer system in which the users are physically remote from each other. It is respectfully submitted that Cuomo merely discloses an adaptation of a 'buddy list' system, and shares many similarities with the systems discussed in depth in the discussion of background art in the present invention. Cuomo does not teach the features of "at least one of parties comprising a plurality of individuals, wherein

each said individual has a respective connection to the presence management system", and therefore the rejection under USC 102 is traversed.

The Examiner argues in section 5 b) of the office action that at least one of the parties comprises plurality of individuals. The Examiner uses the lively example of "Mary Zinger", shown in Figure 3 as 301, having children who could partake in chat activities using a shared family computer. It is respectfully submitted that such a situation is not expressly taught in Cuomo, and therefore is not a valid ground for an objection under USC 102.

However, even though this objection is founded on matter not expressly taught in Cuomo, Applicant has the following comments to make. In order to clarify the distinguishing features of the invention, Claim 1 has been amended to specify that each of the individuals have a respective connection to the presence management system. It is respectfully submitted that Cuomo does not teach a system in which a plurality of individuals can be regarded by the presence management system as a single watching or watched party, while each individual has a separate connection to the system.

A plurality of individuals, each with their own respective connection to the present management system, that are regarded by the presence management system as a single watching or watched party, is termed an "aggregate" for the purposes of the description. Examples of aggregates given in the description of the present application include an association of building contractors in a certain geographical region. Such an association might form an aggregate of watched parties in order that they might be easily contactable as a group rather than individually. However, they would still require a respective connection to the presence management system. Another example is that of an aggregate representing the participants in a conference call. For example, using such an aggregate could allow the conference call to only be set up once all of the members of an aggregate are connected to the presence management system. It is respectfully submitted that the system of Cuomo, even if used with the example of Mary Zinger's family, does not teach the use of an aggregate. Therefore Cuomo does not anticipate claim 1.

Corresponding amendments have been made to independent claims 15, 16 and 17 as have been made to claim 1. The arguments relating to claim 1 apply equally to these claims, and therefore the Examiner's objection in section 18 is traversed.

The remaining system claims, claims 2 to 14, are not anticipated, at least by virtue of their dependency of Claim 1. However, the Applicant has further brief comments to make.

In relation to claim 12, the Examiner argues that "time" is relative, and that it is understood that email addresses do not last indefinitely, and expire when a user changes ISP or when the user expires. In order to distinguish claim 12 more clearly from Cuomo, but without any admission that the original claim is anticipated, claim 12 has been amended to make it clear that the "connection address is only operable for a predetermined time" (emphasis added). Such a feature is not disclosed in Cuomo.

Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,
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